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The American RECORD GUIDE



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The American Music Lover

Columbia's New LP Series

Editorial

COLOMBIA has brought out a new series of 10" LP discs with musical selections lasting from eight to twelve minutes to a side, at \$2.85 a disc. Some time ago Capitol issued a few similar records. This seemed to us a smart move, and it is gratifying to find Columbia following in the path of its predecessor.

It is rumored that 45 rpm recordings of classical music will be abandoned by many companies, which was anticipated. One could hardly expect the listener who consistently purchased LPs to buy a long work on 45s, and not find the breaks annoying.

After the issue of the first LP discs the advent of symphonies, concertos, and other long works on 45s was viewed by many in the trade as a psychological error. Yet, it can be argued a new group of listeners bought 45 attachments for their radios — listeners who had not hitherto had facilities for record playing. Naturally, they expected to be served, and who is to say that they were adverse to breaks in long works. Taking into consideration the prevalence of LP these days, the prediction seems to be borne out that the sales of disjointed works of music (on 78s or 45s) would diminish as time went on. In our estimation, the new Columbia series is the ideal solution to the problem of short works that take two sides of a 78 or 45. Consider, for example, Columbia disc AL-3 (in the new series) which contains Bidu Sayao's much admired version of Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, previously issued on two sides of a 78 rpm

record. Here is a composition which loses a great deal of its charm in having its mood broken. It is, however, perfect in its new LP version, as is its companion selection — also by Miss Sayao — *Violetta's complete scena* (albeit without the tenor voice) from the ending of the first act of *La Traviata*.

The protests against the LP recital record could certainly be happily solved by utilizing the shorter LP, at least for many of the selections contained in the former. Instead of an LP by a given artist containing operatic arias on one aide and lieder on the other, two shorter LPs could be used separating the two programs. This would permit those who desired only the operatic recital, or the lieder one, to obtain what they truly wanted. There have been many mistakes in LP programming, but as times goes on many of these can be rectified. And assuredly, Columbia and Capitol have pioneered the manner in which many can henceforth be avoided.

Some errors in judgment on companion pieces are nevertheless evidenced in Columbia's first ten AL issues. For example, disc AL-2 contains the overture from Offenbach's *Orpheus in Hades* and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*. The fact that both are performed by Rodzinski and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra suggests that the artist dominates the choice. But Offenbach and Liszt are not the most desirable bedfellows. Then, there is disc AL-10 which contains Von Supp's *Poet and Peasant Overture* coupled with the overture from Weber's *Der Freischütz*. The

fact that Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra perform both has undoubtedly dictated the coupling — but once again we encounter misaligned companions. No one would quarrel with discs AL-5, 6 and 7, which contain what the conductor, Sir Thomas Beecham, likes to call his "holiday" music, Ponchielli's *Dance of the Hours* and Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor Overture* (AL-5), Strauss' *Morning Papers Waltz* and Von Suppé's *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna Overture* (AL-6), Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas* and *The Hebrides* overtures (AL-7). Nor would one protest the three others of these ten discs containing music of Brahms (AL-1); music of Saint-Saëns (AL-8); and music of Sibelius (AL-9). One disc, AL-4, finds Kostelanetz performing *Oklahoma Medley* and *Roumanian Fantasy* — a geographical disparity, but nonetheless acceptable.

Despite the above remarks, we feel certain that record buyers will welcome these new Columbia LPs. The problem of finding ideal couplings has been a major one since the beginning of the phonograph, and no matter what decisions are made by a record company there will always be some dissatisfaction with the choices made. Frankly, we do not believe that dissatisfaction would be nullified even if a record concern engaged the services of a musical psychologist to decide couplings for them. There are record buyers who resent two different artists on one record, others who argue against the misalliance of different composers. Perhaps internal problems or agreements with artists dictate couplings. Who knows? In the final analysis, there is always the possibility that the person who buys a disc for a single selection will end up also enjoying the other one. Such are the problems of the recorded music business. We will watch with great interest and anticipation the development of Columbia's new AL LP series. And we hope that RCA Victor, London and others will follow along similar lines.

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Those interested in purchasing *The Record Book* by Sackville-West and Shaw-

Taylor (\$6.75), reviewed in last month's issue, can obtain same from the British Book Centre, 122 East 55 St., New York 22, N. Y. Last month, we erroneously stated that this book was distributed in this country by British Publications, Inc.

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This being the holiday season — we take the opportunity to wish to each and every reader a Cheery Christmas and a Bright New Year. Some of us will be glad to get the holiday season behind us as the exhaustive work accompanying it leaves us in a state of complete fatigue. Our one wish for the New Year would be a unified world with all peoples acknowledging a universal brotherhood of mankind.

New Operatic Releases

WAGNER: *Die Walkuere* (Act 3); Astrid Varnay (Bruennhilde), Sigurd Bjoerling (Wotan), Leonie Rysanek (Sieglinde), and others with Herbert von Karajan conducting the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra. Columbia LP set SL-116, 2 discs, \$10.90.

▲THIS past summer, as everyone must know by now, the festival performances at Bayreuth were resumed for the first time since the close of the Second World War. Under the general direction of Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner, the Bayreuth Festival was a financial and, generally speaking, an artistic success. These records of the complete third act of *Walkuere* were made during an actual festival performance (August 12, 1951). Like those which presented a similar performance of the complete *Meistersinger*, these discs have their memorable moments and their inequalities.

Aside from the magnificently expressive singing of Bjoerling (a newcomer to discs

(Continued on page 108)

THE SINGERS' TOLL

FOR THE YEAR OF 1951

By Leo Riemens*

WRITING these yearly articles on the demise of artists of former days has been a somewhat melancholy task. For one realizes that the generation which helped make great the early gramophone contributions is gradually dying out. Of the pioneer artists in the celebrity sphere few are left after nearly 50 years, and even the succeeding generation is thinning out.

The year 1951 did not bring any tragedy comparable to the untimely death of Maria Cebotari in 1949, or to any singers in the prime of their careers. Even so, it closes the span of life of many singers whose voices will continue to live through their records. Of these, many did not receive obituary notices in the United States. Hence, the death of several will come as news to the many who cherish their recordings.

America lost Olive Fremstad in 1951 after a long illness which had made her lame. She will always be remembered as one of the greatest Wagnerian sopranos of all time, despite the fact that her Columbia records are disappointing. This is not necessarily because of any vocal or artistic blemish, but because they happened to be recorded in a period when Columbia under-recorded the voice. Thus, her gen-

*Mr. Riemens, a well known record reviewer and lecturer of Holland, has contributed a similar article on the passing artists for a number of years.

erous voice sounds cramped and small on her records. But one does acquire some idea of her sublime artistry and her vocal technique (she sings a pure trill in the *Battle Cry* from *Die Walküre*, which not all good Brünnhildes of today can do). Strangely, one or two of her recordings are clearer and louder than the others — her *Vissi d'arte*, for example. Unfortunately, her *Liebestod* is no more than a pale echo. It is understandable that the public, when wishing a Wagnerian soprano selection in the days that Fremstad's records were issued, chose Gadski's tonally-fuller Victor records. Fremstad's *O don fatale* is interesting, because it is the only recording that she made of a mezzo-soprano aria. From it, we can obtain an idea of how she sounded in her contralto days, before she became a dramatic soprano.

A singer who deserves more attention than she has received lately was Lucy Gates, who died on April 30 at the age of 79. Collectors seem inclined to ignore or neglect her Columbias, as did Julian Morton Moses in his otherwise valued *Collectors' Guide to American Recordings*. This latter is supposed to be a complete list of all celebrity recordings issued in America between 1895 and 1925. Yet it leaves out such artists as Lucy Gates, Louis Graveure, Cyrena Van Gordon,

Corinne Rider-Kelsey and Florence Macbeth, all of whom were singers of international reputation whose records *were* in the Celebrity Class. They were far more renowned than José Grayville, Dora Domar, Carlo Cartica, Georges Regis, Gertrud Runge, and many others, whose recordings *are* listed. It cannot be because the repertoires of the former were uninteresting. If this were true, many other prominent singers would have been omitted on the same premise — Reinold Werenrath, Morgan Kingston, George Hamlin — to name but a few.

In the case of Florence Macbeth, whose repertoire was mainly operatic, there seems to have been no legitimate excuse for excluding her recordings. Her omission, and that of the others, can only be viewed as dictated by some arbitrary reason, ruining the value of an otherwise excellent work of phonographic reference. In the same way, Oscar Thompson's *The American Singer* was spoiled by his negligence of all concert singers — such as De Gogorza, Lashanska, etc.

An International Artist

It is true in the case of Lucy Gates that her record repertoire was somewhat banal. But she was a fine singer, who started her career at the Berlin Opera in the palmy days of Karl Muck, Emmy Destinn and Karl Jörn. Later, in 1916, she was one of the brightest stars in Bispham's opera company at the Empire Theatre in New York, singing intimate opera in English. Lucy Gates, a granddaughter of Brigham Young, later became a prominent figure herself in Young's native Salt Lake City. There she organized her own opera company and sang until shortly before her death. As recently as 1948, when she was 67, she appeared in a testimonial concert, singing selections from *La Traviata* and proving how well she had conserved her vocal resources. Hers was a coloratura soprano of fine technique, and well-rounded, smooth tone. It is a pity that Columbia did not allow her to record some Mozart arias. What priceless mementoes these would have been! Of her kindness and generosity, I

know many instances. American collectors should cherish the memory of such a native artist, who did much for the musical advancement of her part of the country.

Mme. Charles Cahier

The last of America's losses for 1951 was **Mme. Charles Cahier**, née Sarah Layton Walker, who died in Hollywood on April 15. Almost the whole of her career was confined to Europe. She married a Swedish diplomat, Charles Cahier, and used his name professionally. Later, after a divorce, she compromised by calling herself Sarah Jane Cahier, or Sascha Cahier in Vienna, where she was teaching after her retirement from public life.

She sang with the Vienna Opera Company under Gustav Mahler, and during her career in that famous city enjoyed tremendous popularity both as an operatic and a concert singer. During World War I, she sang in Sweden, and in 1920 took part in the Mahler Festival at Amsterdam under Mengelberg. In America, she was not too well known; though she was on the Metropolitan roster from 1911 to 1913, her appearances were few. After 1928, she sang with the Philadelphia Opera Company while teaching at the Curtis Institute. Afterwards she returned to Vienna, where she taught at the Musikakademie until her return to America in 1939. Among those who studied with her for some time were Marian Anderson and Lauritz Melchior. It was she who recognized Melchior's dramatic tenor potentialities when he was still singing baritone parts. Unfortunately, this great artist (far more famous in Europe than in her own country) made few recordings. The only old ones known are two *Carmen* arias on G&T. After more than 20 years, she reappeared on records at the close of her career on some extremely rare Swedish H.M.V. discs, of which her arias from *Le Prophète* and *La Favorita* were once issued by IRCC. Also among the Swedish records were an aria from *Carmen*, an old French song, items like *Sally in our Alley*, and a Negro Spiritual (which she sang in her recitals long before they became popular).

lar and before there were Negro singers).

Her best record, however, is the rare Ultraphone with the "Urlicht" from Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony, and his song *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*. Both are sung with true beauty of tone and that intangible spiritual quality which all too few singers can summon. This disc has justly become a fabulous and legendary collectors' item, as the matrices were destroyed in 1933, and all too few copies of the record had been sold up to that time. It is one of the most authentic Mahler records in existence, as she was coached by him and was one of his favorite singers.

Giuseppe Agostini, the Italian tenor who died this past year in the United States, was associated with the musical life of his adopted country for more than half his lifetime. It was he who created the part of Rodolfo in the first performance of *La Bohème* in America, long before the opera was presented at the Metropolitan. He only sang once at the Metropolitan; this was when he substituted in a performance for Caruso in 1904. He was otherwise quite popular with the San Carlo and minor companies. During the last period of his life he taught singing in Philadelphia. His records are rather rare. They include some Italian songs on green label Columbias, and operatic selections on Italian Odeons.

Walther Kirchhoff

Perhaps of more importance was the death of **Walther Kirchhoff**, the Wagnerian tenor who sang at the Metropolitan from 1926 until 1931. Kirchhoff reached the pinnacle of his career rather late in life. Born in 1879, it was not until 1907 that he became a leading tenor in Berlin. Of interest to Americans is the fact that Kirchhoff created the leading role in an American opera, *Poia* (never produced in the United States), by Arthur Nevin, a brother of Ethelbert Nevin. This was at the Berlin Royal Opera House in 1910. It was one of the few American operas based on a native subject (an old Indian legend) that seemed well suited for operatic treatment. The opera was conducted

by Karl Muck, and besides Kirchhoff in the cast there were Florence Easton, Lola Arnot de Padilla, Margarete Ober, Johannes Bishoff and Putnam Griswold. Despite its fine cast, the opera was not a success. But I am glad that Kirchhoff autographed for me a striking photograph of himself as Poia. He used the photo (which he did not know existed until I sent it to him) to illustrate his last lectures about his career, at the Frankfurt America House.

A Famous Loge

Kirchhoff is best remembered at the Metropolitan for his truly effective Loge in *Das Rheingold*. His voice by that time had become rather dry and heavy. Later, he recovered much of its old timbre after he worked with Lilli Lehmann, shortly before her death. He even sang at the close of his lectures a few weeks before his death, which was a peaceful one. He was found in his favorite armchair, holding a volume of Goethe's poems in his lap, having passed away from heart failure while reading. Kirchhoff's recordings are not unknown. He made quite a few acoustics for German H.M.V. and Polydor, mostly Wagnerian, but before that he had also recorded on Pathé and in his earliest days sang the role of Walther in the complete second act of *Tannhäuser*. More interesting are his electrical recordings. With Margarete Bäumer, he sang the opening duet from *Götterdämmerung* and the *Tristan* "Love Duet" on four 10" sides for Odeon-Parlophone, around 1932. These are his best recordings, and they sound surprisingly youthful. He also recorded quite a number of selections from all four of *The Ring* operas for Pathé, in a series made under the direction of Franz von Hoeßlin at Paris in 1930, during a Wagnerian season at the Champs Elysées.

Another veteran tenor who died in 1951 was the Viennese **Georg Maikl**, born in 1876. This remarkable man made his debut at the Vienna Opera in 1904 (during Mahler's reign) and remained an active member of 46 seasons (till 1950). One of his last roles was the Patriarch Abdisu in Pfitzner's *Palestrina*. He still sang Gou-

nod's *Faust* at the age of 61! But his specialty was Mozart. He sang Don Ottavio in the famous 1909 performances of *Don Giovanni* at Salzburg, in Italian, with Lilli Lehmann, Gadski, Farrar, Scotti and De Segurola, earning the warmest admiration of Lehmann. He was unsurpassed in oratorio. He is said to have had a repertoire of over 200 roles, big and small, and he could appear in any of them on a day's notice. Unfortunately, little remains of his voice on records. Electrically, we only have him in Weingartner's performance of the Beethoven *Ninth Symphony*. Acoustically, he made a few records on Favorite and Pathé labels around 1905. There seems to have been nothing during the intervening years except some trios on brown Odeon, made in 1906.

Felicia Koschowska ~~X~~

Only recently I heard about the death of *Felicia Kaschowska* at the age of 80 in Bielsko, Poland. She sang several seasons at the Metropolitan — first as a young coloratura soprano (a protégé of Lilli Lehmann) from 1888 to 1892, and later as a Wagnerian soprano in 1908-09. In Germany, she appeared chiefly as a guest artist, but she was greatly esteemed as one of the few Wagnerian sopranos trained in the true "bel canto" school. She really sang every tone with beautiful timbre without resorting to the Sprechgesang then so much in vogue. Her *Isolde* at 1912 the Amsterdam Wagnerreinigung is still remembered and talked about. During the 1920's, she was one of the most successful vocal teachers in Vienna, esteemed for coaching operatic roles and lieder. Among her pupils was Selma Kurz's daughter, Dési Halban-Kurz. Lotte Lehmann also worked with her for several years. Significantly, Frieda Hempel coached in lieder with her after her Metropolitan career was over. The only, fairly unknown record of Koschowska (and even that a rarity) is a duet from Lohengrin with Hempel, made during the period when Hempel was studying with her. Otherwise, she made one Anker record — Massenet's *Elégie* and *Vissi d'arte*. It is

known that another Polydor duet (with Hempel) exists — the "Letter Duet" from *Le Nozze di Figaro*. It is said that Mme. Hempel possesses the only existent copy of this. If true, it is to be hoped that she can be prevailed upon to consent to its being re-recorded.

Josefina Huguet ~~X~~

While Cahier, Koschowska and Maikl's names are known to only a small group of collectors, the name of *Josefina Huguet* (or Giuseppina as she was known in Italy and on record labels) is a household word to nearly every early-record enthusiast. With Marie Michailowa, she can be said to be the first of the real gramophone *prima donnas*. She was by no means just a gramophone artist, but quite a well known and admired singer in Italy, Spain and even America, which she visited in the 1890s with a travelling company. In New York, the critics compared her with Patti. She sang at La Scala in 1896 in *Hamlet* with Sammarco and Parsi-Pettinella. She made an enormous amount of recordings, of which the many imported matrices — pressed by Victor — only scratched the surface. Bauer lists no less than 41 titles made in Barcelona in 1903, and her G&Ts and HMVs since 1906 are even more numerous. She was Nedda in the first complete recording of *Pagliacci*, under Leoncavallo's direction (the first complete opera ever recorded). She sang on celebrity records only when assisting Fernando De Lucia, Antonio Paoli and other tenors, but her artistry deserved the celebrity rating. I suggest that record enthusiasts listen to her *Casta diva*, especially in comparison with other records of it. I contend it can successfully maintain itself against any of them — even Sembrich's and Boninsegna's. Her coloratura was always clear and neat. Her later records suffered from the fuzzy quality of the 1907-08 G&Ts. Her Barcelona series were far more brilliant. She died in Barcelona this year at the age of 80.

(To be concluded next month)

Some Chamber Works

BARBER: *Quartet in D major, Op. 11*; **WOLF:** *Italian Serenade*; **STRADIVARI RECORDS STRING QUARTET, BARBER:** *Sonata for Cello and Piano*; **George Ricci and Leopold Mittman, Stradivari LP disc STR602, \$5.95.**

BEETHOVEN: *Trio in E flat, Op. 3; The Pasquier Trio.* Allegro LP ALG-3023, \$5.95.

BEETHOVEN: *Trio in G major, Op. 9, No. 1 and Serenade in D major, Op. 8; The Pasquier Trio.* Allegro LP disc ALG-3031, \$5.95.

BRITTON: *Phantasy for Oboe and Strings, Op. 2; Quartet No. 1 in D, Op. 25; Galimari String Quartet and Harold Gombberg (oboe), Esoteric LP disc ES-504, \$5.95.*

BRAHMS: *Sonata in D minor, Op. 108; Nathan Milstein (violin) and Vladimir Horowitz (piano), RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-106, \$4.67.*

FAURE: *Sonata in A major, Op. 13; LALO: Sonata in D major, Op. 12; Michel Chauveton (violin) and Brooks Smith (piano).* Allegro LP disc ALF-3032, \$5.95.

MOZART: *Trio in E flat, K.498; Reginald Kell (clarinet), Lillian Fuchs (viola) and M. Horszowski (piano); BEETHOVEN: Trio in B flat, Op. 11; Mr. Kell with Frank Miller (cello) and Mr. Horszowski.* Decca LP disc DL-9543, \$5.95.

MOZART: *Quartet in B flat, K.458 (Hunt); Loewenguth Quartet.* Decca 10" LP disc DL-7517, \$3.85.

MOZART: *Quartet in B flat, K.458 (Hunt); Quartet in E flat, K.428 Amadeus String Quartet.* Westminster LP disc WL-5099, \$5.95.

MOZART: *Quintet in G minor, K.516; Amadeus String Quartet with Cecil Aronowitz (viola).* Westminster LP disc WL-5086, \$5.95.

SCHUMANN: *Quintet in E flat, Op. 44; Clifford Curzon (piano) with the Budapest String Quartet.* Columbia LP disc ML-4426, \$5.45.

•**BARBER'S** early quartet does not have as strong a profile as some of his later music, but there is a seriousness of purpose in its lyrical romantic writing which commands respect. Its slow movement is best known in its arrangement for string orchestra — Toscanini having recorded it. The cello sonata, an earlier work owing much to Brahms, is gratifyingly written for the cellist. Wolf's ingratiating *Italian Serenade* is too well known for comment.

Arnold Eidus and George Ricci have proved themselves admirable artists on records in their own right. Now, with to other capable players — Louis Graeber (violin) and David Mankowitz (viola) — they have formed a quartet which deserves watching. Their renditions of the Barber and Wolf reveal their musical assurance and understanding of balancing string timbres. Ricci and Mittman do justice to the sonata. The recording is tonally faithful.

The stylistic consanguinity of the Pasquier brothers places them among the world's most satisfying chamber groups. Both their performance of the early E flat major *Trio* — an overlong work in the manner of an 18th-century suite — and their renditions of the G major *Trio* and the more striking *Serenade* are well recorded examples of their

fine artistry, though the latter is challenged by the two Fuchs and Rose version (Decca DL-7506).

Milstein and Horowitz seem unable to adjust their individual styles satisfactorily in the D minor *Sonata*. Horowitz proves himself the more assertive player — the reverse of what happened in the Heifetz-Kapell version. There has been only one completely satisfactory version of this work on records — made by Szigeti and Petri. Though the Stern-Zakin is praiseworthy (the best LP version), Columbia should also issue an LP of the older recording.

Both of the Britten works reveal admirable economy of material and ingenious development. The *Phantasy*, written at twenty-two for Leon Goossens, is in one long movement with changes of tempo. The technical brilliance and often picturesque qualities of this work are not advantageously exploited by the present performance in which the oboist continuously plays at one level of tone, ignoring the dynamic markings of the score. The string quartet, written seven years later, also shows the imagination and fertility of its composer, though its themes are less striking than what he does with them. Modern in spirit, it suggests to me the influence of de Falla with some of its guitar-like effects. Here Britten's fondness for technical brilliance and his piquant wit are often well displayed. A serious opus, this quartet commands respect. The Galimari play this music with zestful confidence, but the recording, though realistic, does not permit a true assessment of the players' dynamic scale.

The French violinist Chauveton plays the familiar Fauré sonata with true Gallic refinement. One feels he has lived intimately with this music. His American partner is temperamentally well allied. The lesser known Lalo sonata — more eclectic than the Fauré — has flowing lyrical lines and a goodly share of sentiment. Its most striking movement is the buoyant finale. The work is nicely played. Both are well recorded with an equitable balance.

Kell previously recorded both trios with gifted English players a few years back. His satisfaction with those former performances may well be shifted to the present ones, for here are musically impeccable renditions in which the violist and the pianist are exceptionally gifted ensemble players. As for Kell, his playing, always of a high order, is consistently expressive. Excellent recording.

Mozart "Par Excellence"

The Amadeus Quartet provides some of the most winning Mozart playing that has been recorded in many a day. As finely polished and expressively performed as the Loewenguth version of the "Hunt" quartet is, I find myself swayed toward the Amadeus version. While one admits that the Loewenguth's style is more traditionally classical, the romantic glow that the Amadeus group contrives is not — in my estimation — remiss in the music of Mozart. The latter players have a youthful exuberance which gives the music a healthy, fulsome quality. Moreover, they have a tonal warmth which is not equalled by the French group, and the spaciousness and acoustic liveness of Westminster's recording serves them to better advantage.

Space does not permit detailed discussion of the Amadeus playing of the other three quartets, but let it be said their versions rank among the best. These players seem ideally matched in tonal quality and temperament. There is equal weight to the inner and outer voices. Their interchange of solo work is most satisfactorily handled. For beauty of tone and interpretative excellence, I cite the slow movement of the A major *Quartet* which left a lasting impression on my mind. But again, the exuberance that prevails in the quicker movements is not forgotten.

The performance of the G minor *Quintet* has extraordinary sweetness of tone with stress of sentiment. The tempi are right in every movement, which was not true of the recent Griller Perform-

ance. Perhaps this music allows for more dramatic intensity than these gifted players exploit, but one feels they are very wise to let this most personal musical document of Mozart speak for itself. With true tonal graciousness and fluency of movement, the Amadeus brings this music to life in a memorable way. And Westminster's realistic recording does them full justice. One does not forget the excellence of the Budapest version wherein dramatic intensity was often effectively brought out, though frequently at the expense of rough accentuation.

Style and technical assurance are the redeeming features of the new Schumann quintet. The most communicative playing is found from Curzon's piano, yet neither he nor the string players lift the work far above the ground at the beginning. The memory of the old Gabrilowitsch-Flonzaley performance prevails — no other since has had similar soaring qualities. One asks for more elation in this music — the unmistakable feeling of joyful rather than respectful participation. There deeper reverence in the earlier Serkin-Busch Quartet version (Columbia ML-2081) if not the fullest substantiation of the music's soaring qualities, and there was richer sound and far less rough accentuation in the wholly objective performance of the Rubinstein-Paganini Quartet (Victor LM-1095). Excellent recording.

But in spite of the above complaints (which I believe everyone will have in varying degrees), there can be no doubt that dramatically this performance is far and away superior to what one usually encounters. These people really know and believe in *Walkuere*. Make no mistake about that. Even through some almost chaotic wailing of the Valkyries, some singing by the Sieglinde which is far off pitch, and etc., and etc., there is a vigor, an intensity from everyone which fits this glorious and not-so-glorious music.

These two LPs contain more dramatic excitement than one normally finds in two or three recorded operas. One might want to own this set if only for the very real presence of this precious element.

—C.J.L.

New Operatic Releases

(Continued from page 102)

and on the basis of these perhaps the best Wagnerian bass-baritone since Schorr) and the splendid urgency of Karajan's conducting, there is little in the way of execution that one can entirely admire. The various *Walkueren*, though all strong of voice, are more often than not unpleasant of sound, off pitch, and careless of many of the musical amenities. The same might be said of Leonie Rysanek's Sieglinde. And though Astrid Varnay has a fine, powerful voice at any point in her wide range and though she shows a knowledge of the text that is quite uncommon, her vocal gifts are on more than one occasion painfully undisciplined.

The engineers, too, have had their problems in recording this performance. Problems, particularly, of balance and of mastering the Bayreuth Theatre's famed or infamous, as you will, resonance. A. R., writing in *The Gramophone*, has already pointed out that he heard two Grimerdes and two Rossweises at places where there certainly should be no more than one each [sic].

VERDI: *Un Giorno di Regno* (complete); Renato Capecechi (Belfiore), Sesto Bruscantini (Baron Di Kelbar), Lina Pagliughi (Marchesa del Poggio), Laura Cozzi (Giulietta), Cristiano Dalmangas (La Rocca), and others, with Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiano conducted by Alfredo Simonetto. Cetra-Soria LP set CSLP-1225, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲VERDI'S second opera was written in his twenty-sixth year at a time when he was ill and bowed with grief from the loss of his daughter, son and first wife. Strangely, his music had in it a sparkle and light-heartedness which he did not duplicate, says Francis Toye, until he came to write the music for the Page in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. This is a quaint curio — almost a museum piece, which was whistled and hooted at when first produced in 1840. The story — old-fashioned nonsense — is described as *melodramma giocoso*. Verdi's music is decidedly eclectic — reminiscences of Bellini and Rossini. What fascinates me about these early operas of Verdi are the germs of ideas, snatches of melodies and various cadences that point ahead to the mature Verdi we know so well.

The performance seems to me to be a good one with seasoned singers like Brus-

cantini, Pagliughi and Capecchi, and live orchestral direction from Simonetto. The recording, like most of Cetra-Soria's, has a rich, full, tonal body.

—J.N.

MASSENET: *Manon* (Opera in 5 Acts); **Janine Micheau** (Manon), **Libero de Luca** (Chevalier des Grieux), **Julien Giovannetti** (Comte de Grieux), **Roger Bourdin** (Lescaut), **M. de Badet** (Narrator), and others, with **Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra Comique**, Paris, conducted by **Albert Wolff**. London LP set LLPA-7, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲MORE than 20 years ago, Columbia issued a virtually complete and excellently performed recording of this opera, which today is technically outmoded. A new version on LP and with up-to-date technique was highly desirable, for *Manon* exudes a French mid-eighteenth century atmosphere of fans, powder and patches, that is found nowhere else.

Unfortunately, one cannot endorse this latest version as the legitimate successor to the old set, for the opera as presented here is far from complete (notwithstanding the fact that *complete* is marked on the set's pretty cover), and that the word is repeated and sustained in the notes accompanying the records.

In the interests of accuracy, 120 pages have been slashed, here and there, from the score's 396 pages. Nor are these deletions the usual cuts observed in any theater, much less at the Opéra-Comique in actual performance. As a result, one gets the feeling of a vest-pocket edition of the opera.

Almost all the spoken passages, one of the chief charms of this score, have been summarily eliminated. This spoken dialogue is always heard over an accompaniment (unlike the dialogue in *Carmen*, which in Paris is spoken without the benefit of musical background), and it constitutes the opera's particular fascination, even more than the arias and duets.

To one who has heard many actual performances of *Manon* at the Opéra-Comique, it is utter folly to eliminate the ardent

words spoken by Des Grieux to Manon at their first meeting, or the bits of intimate conversation that occur between the lovers during the second act.

Cuts are also made of passages that are important to the unfolding of the story: Guillot's attempts to approach Manon, after she has descended from the coach at Amiens; the scene between De Bretigny and Guillot at Cours-la-Reine; the conversation between Des Grieux and his father in Saint Sulpice, with the latter's unforgettable *Adieu. . . reste à prier*; Manon's entrance into the church — *Ces murs silencieux. . . Cet air froid qu'on respire. . .* To anyone who loves *Manon* these deletions are insufferable.

Cuts have also been made in some of the minor characters, the virtual suppression of some of these going as far as who give the opera its atmosphere and aid in building up to the big moments, (which incidentally have not been tampered with).

To compensate for this arbitrary streamlining, a narrator often interrupts the action with commentaries written by André de Badet, which to one listener proved annoying in the extreme. The effect is not unlike having some one in the seat next to you, telling you the plot while the opera is in progress.

The notes seek to explain this intrusion by stating that "The French affiliate of London ffrr and the Opéra-Comique have gone back to the original source for the libretto: the story by the Abbé Prevost. The opera is presented through the eyes of the author by means of a narrator. . ." But M. de Badet is not the Abbé Prevost, nor should we be here concerned with the novel, but rather with Massenet's complete, unabridged score.

One's regret grows as one listens to these London discs, for the recording is a superfine job, and the cast and its manner of singing is often exemplary.

Janine Micheau, who since 1937 has been by far the best lyric-coloratura soprano in Paris, is an exquisite *Manon*. Her scale is beautifully equalized; her style and diction, a model. Moreover, the tones of Mlle. Micheau's voice are

clear and fresh, brilliant when she so desires, as in the *Cours-la-Reine* scene. This is first class vocalism, as the singer substitutes the seldom-heard and far more difficult Fabliau in place of the Gavotte, which Massenet's score tells us is permissible.

Not nearly so outstanding is the Des Grieux of Libéro de Luca, the chief virtue of whose pallid singing is that it sounds young. This tenor, in this opera, is an indifferent stylist. However, now and again, he makes a good effect, as in the closing measures of the famous *Dream*. Mr. de Luca is not in the elegant French tradition; he is no Clément, no Béyle, no Muratore, no Thill.

Roger Bourdin, Paris' best singing-actor since Vanni-Marcoux, is a wonderfully racy Lescaut, mordant in diction, pungent in tone. Here is a personality!

The others are all good, particularly the fine-voiced Comte Des Grieux of Julien Giovannetti.

Albert Wolff, in such music, is a conductor of vast resource and experience; both orchestra and chorus make an admirable impression under his knowing direction. The sounds that emanate from these surfaces are uniformly fine-grained and fall most agreeably on the ear.

In view of all this, it is indeed regrettable that *Manon*, as presented here, has the effect of a truncated work of art.

—Max de Schanensee

PUCCINI: *Tosca* (complete); **Dall' Argine** (*Tosca*), **Nino Scattolini** (*Cavaradossi*), **Scipio Colombo** (*Scarpia*), and others, with **Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra** conducted by **Argeo Quadri**. Westminster set WAL-302, 3 LP discs, \$18.50.

PUCCINI: *Tosca* (complete); **Vassila Petrova** (*Tosca*), **Eddy Ruhl** (*Cavaradossi*), **Piero Campolonghi** (*Scarpia*) and others, with **Orchestra of the Maggio Fiorentino and Chorus of the Teatro Communale** conducted by **Emidio Tieri**. Remington set RLP-199-62, 3 LP discs, \$8.60.

▲**TWO PERFORMANCES** of Puccini's celebrated operatic melodrama which show striking disparities in recording techniques and artistry. Westminster's — a realistic reproduction that sacrifices neither *fortissimi* nor *pianissimi* — I would rate as the most vital recording of a complete opera to date. Remington's recording lacks naturalism in sound, notably from the orchestra which seems to be about half the size of the Vienna one.

The Westminster performance has the better artists, notably the tenor and the baritone. Dall' Argine, a true dramatic soprano has tonal richness and warmth. Like Caniglia, she tends to over-dramatize the role, which sometimes results in a loss of vocal smoothness as well as firmness. On the whole, however, her *Tosca* is a believable being — more appealing than Caniglia's. Petrova's *Tosca*, in comparison, is hardly a credible personality. Her singing is fluttery and uncertain — much of her high tessitura being scooped and pinched. Her performance definitely suggests a novice in the part.

Scattolini is a fine Cavaradossi, with a beautiful natural voice which he uses well if too forcefully on occasion. His *Recondita armonia* — like Gigli's — is sung too loudly, but he can and does often sing sensitively. In comparison, Ruhl's thin voiced Cavacardossi is pallid and colorless. Colombo's excellently sung Scarpia is a wholly believable characterization. A new baritone, his progress deserves watching. The Remington Scarpia is not in the same class. Quadri's orchestral direction is more vital and far better detailed than Tieri's. In my estimation, Westminster's release can be rated as a first-class performance by present-day standards of Italian operatic production, while the Remington is definitely secondegrade.

—P.H.R.

WAGNER: *Tristan und Isolde* — *Isolde's Narrative and Curse* and *Liebesnacht*; **Kirsten Flagstad** (soprano), **Elizabeth Höngen** (contralto) with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Issay Dobrowen** in the *Narrative*; **Flagstad, Set Svanholm** (tenor),

Constance Shacklock (contralto) with same orchestra conducted by **Karl Böhm** in the latter. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1151, \$5.72.

▲THIS DISC represents the first really satisfactory recording and performance of the *Love Duel* from *Tristan* that we have ever had. The only other performance that was ever in the running was the now ancient Leider-Melchior version; and though it gave us a portion of the opening part of the duet that we do not have here, it was marred by broad cuts and inadequate engineering art. On the credit side, however, was the passion and splendid voice of Frieda Leider, and the youthful fervor and exquisite vocal beauty of the Melchior of 20 years ago.

Here we have every note of the Love Duet from *O sink hernieder* on, with Kirsten Flagstad at the top of her interpretive powers and with all of her fabulous vocal resources, and Set Svanholm getting all of the musical and expressive mileage out of his less than first class vocal equipment — aided by the accurate but somewhat thin-voiced Constance Shacklock and some excellent playing by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Karl Böhm. And for once, there is a recording that, if it is not perfectly balanced, does these executants quite a measure of justice. It is in every way an improvement on the original H.M.V. discs which first presented this estimable performance.

The pacing here is slow enough so that all expressive details have a chance to make their points, and controlled in such a way that none of the cumulative tension is lost. Moreover, this is one of the few times that you will find both Isolde and Tristan really paying close attention to the dynamic markings that are the difference between a magical and a routine performance.

The superb Flagstad-Höngen-Dobrowen rendition of Isolde's *Narration and Curse* has been reviewed in these pages before. I must add, however, that the dubbing here is not as effective a recording as the original HMV discs or RCA Victor's earlier 45 rpm release.

—C.J.L.

VERDI: *Il Trovatore* (complete); **Caterina Mancini** (Leonora), **Miriam Pirazzini** (Azucena), **Giacomo Lauri-Volpi** (Manrico), **Carlo Tagliabue** (Count di Luna), **Alfredo Colella** (Ferrando), and others, with **Chorus and Orchestra of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Fernando Previtali**. Cetra Soria LP set CSLP-1226, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲VERDI'S twelfth opera, *Il Trovatore*, is 99 years old this coming January. Since its premiere at Rome, on that distant winter's evening, it has been a continuous success. Despite its crude and melodramatic libretto, it sustains public interest for Verdi's melodiousness. Moreover, it gives four singers nearly equal chances to score successes, though the contralto is probably the most important of the four. With so much blood and thunder, *Il Trovatore* demands a cast of artists that can sing not only lustily but beautifully. Under such circumstances it can command the respect of almost any music listener, even if he has grown somewhat weary of its many barrel-organ tunes.

This new production of *Il Trovatore* boasts only one artist of true distinction — Carlo Tagliabue, who gives one of his best performances on records. There was a day when Lauri-Volpi stopped the show, and rightfully too, with his *Di quella pira*. But in his late 50s, the tenor's voice is "glassy" hard and without feeling. His final high C in his big moment flutters like a yacht at anchor in a breeze and, his *Ah! si, ben mio* is sung twice as fast as marked without expression. Mancini finds Leonora a rather difficult role for her vocal resources. In the middle register, she often sings with lovely tone but in her two arias she finds the upper reaches tough going. Miriam Pirazzini, a mezzo-soprano of the strident variety, hits the notes fairly accurately but there is little if any tenderness in her portrayal of the Gypsy mother. Everybody shouts valiantly, reminding us that *Trovatore* is a robust affair — everybody, that is but the chorus who do sing softly on occasion. Previtali handles the orchestral reins with assurance — giving

life and vigor to this performance. The recording is sonorous and full toned and generally well balanced. Italy should be able to do better, but I doubt very much that a really first-class performance like those of the old days — with tenors like Caruso or Martinelli (in his prime), sopranos like Destinn or Ponselle, contraltos like Homer or Matzenauer — could be drawn together in any opera house of today.

—P.H.R.

GIORDANO: *Fedora* (complete); **Maria Caniglia** (Fedora), **Carmen Piccini** (Olga), **Giacinto Prandelli** (Loris), **Scipione Colombo** (De Sirieux), **Aldo Bertocci** (Desiré and Rouvel), and others, with **Chorus and Orchestra of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Robert Benaglio**. Cetra-Soria LP set CSLP-1222, two disc, \$11.90.

▲AN EXCEPTIONALLY good performance of an Italian opera which has never really found favor in this country. *Fedora* was given at the Metropolitan in 1906 and again in 1923. Loris was a favorite role of Caruso, but he only sang it seven times in all at the Metropolitan with the fabulously beautiful Lina Cavalieri as his *Fedora*. In 1923, the opera was revived for Jeritza whose Loris was Martinelli. This opera is old fashioned melodrama — the original play was written by Sardou for Sarah Bernhardt. Giordano's music though effective is hardly as telling or as original as Puccini's setting of Sardou's *Tosca*. It is almost too sentimental, but as an operatic vehicle *Fedora* with good artists makes for a successful theatre for its composer was a competent stage craftsman. It is all about Russian intrigue and vengeance in the old days of the Czarist regimes in Russia.

The present performance is well sung. Caniglia handles tellingly the role of the revenging princess, who falls in love with the man on whom her vengeance is sworn. Prandelli, a gifted lyric tenor who recently made a successful debut at the Metropolitan, is a vocally dependable Loris though lacking the richer expressive qualities of his predecessors. There is not a

poor singer in the cast in consideration of their allotted roles, and the orchestral direction of Benaglio is highly competent. There are many who think that *Fedora* is a better opera than Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* — Caruso is said to have thought so. He never sang *Andrea Chenier* at the Metropolitan.

—J.N.

VERDI: *Aida* (complete); **Caterina Mancini** (Aida), **Antonio Massaria** (King), **Giulieta Simionato** (Amneris), **Mario Filippeschi** (Rhadames), **Rolando Panerai** (Amonasro), **Giulio Neri** (Ramfis), **Salvatore di Tommaso** (A Messenger), **Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Vittorio Gui**. Cetra-Soria LP set 1228, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲THIS is better performance of Verdi's masterpiece than the Victor offering with Caniglia, Gigli and Stignani. The principals, well-schooled in their different roles, acquit themselves in a more satisfactory manner.

One of the most interesting soprano voices of modern Italy is that of Caterina Mancini, who unfortunately does not always employ her vocal resources for best results. It is obvious in all that she has contributed to the phonograph to date that her high tones are not yet developed to the best advantage, often being pinched and white. Her middle voice, however, has much beauty and it is apparent from her *Aida* that she can float her voice to an A natural above the staff in a way that is tonally appealing. *Aida* is the best and most carefully sung role that she has recorded to date. Here her artistry is estimable as she is not guilty of the dramatic excesses which cause Caniglia to force her voice unduly. Simionato's Amneris is as fine a performance as the phonograph has ever known. Her portrayal has nobility, refinement and beauty of tone. In the first scene of the last act, she makes the most of her opportunities in a telling manner both dramatically and vocally.

Filippeschi, as Rhadames, has the youthful fervor and heroic quality of voice which

(Continued on page 132)

Record Notes and Reviews



THERE IS IN SOULS *a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.*

—William Cowper

Orchestra

BARTOK: *Deux Images*; New Sym. Orch., Tibor Serly (cond). Bartok Records BRS-305, \$4.75.

▲Here are two landscape pieces, dating from 1910, with strong influences of Debussy, Richard Strauss and others, along with hints of the sharp melodic curves and pungent harmony that was to characterize the mature Bartok. Both compositions — *In Full Flower* and *Village Dance* — lack concentration, formally and stylistically. The performances are good; the recording clean and alive, but lacking in sufficient body.

—C.J.L.

BARTOK: *Music for Stringed Instruments, Percussion and Celesta*; **BLOCH:** *Concerto Grosso*; **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** conducted by Rafael Kubelik. Mercury LP disc MG-50001, \$5.95. **Moussorgsky-Ravel:** *Pictures at an Exhibition*; Same artists. Mercury LP disc MG-50000, \$5.95.

▲BOTH Columbia and Victor in the past made some highly rated recordings with the Chicago Symphony, but it remains for Mercury to give us the most realistic reproduction from this source to date. It is

not a matter of range alone in these extraordinarily live recordings, but also a matter of rich sonorities with some of the truest dynamics to be realized in the reproduction of a domestic symphony orchestra. Advances in recording techniques are evidenced on all sides these days, and one may expect further developments as time goes on. Those who possess extended-range equipment will delight in the wonderful ear-filling sounds, though I expect even those who own ordinary commercial equipment will also obtain gratifying results especially in the vivid dynamics.

Kubelik is a most gifted conductor, as many of us already know. He has a superb virtuosic sense and he has extraordinary poise and true sensitivity. One has the feeling that he has real affection for the works performed on these discs — certainly he has full understanding of their musical worth. This is by far the best *Pictures at an Exhibition* to be released. But Kubelik's uncanny insight into a score is searchingly revealed in his reading of the Bartok — a work that requires several hearings for most to appreciate its worth. Bloch's *Concerto Grosso* is familiar to many in two chamber ensemble recordings, neither of which gives us a true idea of the quality of this unusual score. Kubelik confirms its vitality — a fact of which Bloch's dissenters were seemingly

unaware in the past. I have always believed that this music could be made to sound if given a really vital reading like the one it gets here. —P.H.R.

FRANCK: *Psyche* (Tone Poem): Linz **Bruckner Symphony Orchestra** conducted by L. G. Jochum; **BERLIOZ:** *Les Francs-Juges Overture; Symphony* Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Sergiu Celibidache. *Urania LP disc URLP-7024, \$5.95.*

▲FRANCK'S *Psyche* is "unblushingly passionate," as one writer has said. It is music of sweetness and poetic sentiment — love-music that somehow does not quite make real the lovers of the ancient Greek myth. One can admit that it "represents Franck at the height of his creative powers" — that it flows smoothly and reveals fine symphonic qualities, but it fails to attain a telling climax. The choral sections of the work are no longer heard, but the three orchestral parts played on this record are familiar in the concert hall. Jochum's performance is most sympathetic and delicately nuanced.

The early Berlioz overture is all that remains of an uncompleted opera. Not one of his great overtures, it nonetheless holds attention. Its opening *Adagio* is impressive, especially the brass section which makes use of three ophicleides (the bass instrument of the key-bugle family). The opening theme of the *Allegro* is lightweight; it was one that Berlioz wrote in childhood. But there are better tunes which he has treated effectively. The work is, however, too long. This performance is one worth hearing — its dynamic gradations are exceptional with true *pianissimos*. Credit is due the engineers that made both of these recordings for retaining this type of realism. —P.H.R.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 2, Op. 73; San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux (cond.). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1173, \$5.72.*

▲CRITICS gave this performance a high rating when it was issued a few years

back. Brahms' "Pastoral" symphony seems to have been entrusted to sympathetic conductors when Monteux and Rodzinski were assigned recordings. The choice will be a personal one, for honors are about even all around. —J.N.

MILHAUD: *La Crédation du Monde; COPLAND:* *El Salón México; The Columbia Chamber and Symphony Orchestra* conducted by Leonard Bernstein. *Columbia 10" LP ML2203, \$4.00.*

▲MILHAUD'S score for the 1923 *ballet nègre*, *The Creation of the World*, remains just as exciting and beautiful as when he first wrote it. His grasp of the jazz idiom is just as phenomenal as is his classic restraint in the slower sections. One may well agree with Aaron Copland in calling this work an "authentic small masterpiece." Those who know the early recording conducted by Milhaud himself have treasured it for years. They may now relinquish it in favor of this splendidly recorded and intensely vital performance. Bernstein, whose way with music of this *genre* is well-known, surpasses himself. His feeling for dynamic contrast, rhythmic drive and *concertante* balance was never better exemplified. The Columbia Chamber Orchestra matches him in all respects.

In 1931 Copland visited Mexico. The land, the people and the music made such an impression on him that the following year he began writing what turned out to be his most popular work, *El Salón México*. Koussevitzky's earlier recording of the work is well-known and consequently constitutes a precedent. Bernstein's performance resembles it very little and often surpasses it. He treats the score as the dance-hall music that it is. There is a great deal of high-spirited vulgarity in the work which Koussevitzky and the Boston certainly failed to underline. Bernstein and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra have a field day turning in a raucous, yet at times touchingly poetic, performance. The recording is extremely lifelike. —D.R.

TATI-TATI: *Symphonic Variations on "Chopsticks,"* freely transcribed and orchestrated by Nicolas Tcherepin (1937); *Symphonic Paraphrases on "Chopsticks,"* freely transcribed and orchestrated by Werner Janssen (1951); **Columbia Symphony Orchestra** conducted by Werner Janssen. Columbia LP disc ML-4480, \$5.45.

▲HERE we have a metamorphosis of a tune, originated by Borodin's adapted daughter, that he called *Tati-Tati*, but which was destined to become known as *Chopsticks*. The whole story is told on the wrapper of the disc by the eminent San Francisco music critic, Alfred Frankenstein — who was responsible for this recording. Borodin and his cohorts wrote variations and short pieces on this theme, and even Liszt supplied a paraphrase, some of which Tcherepin later orchestrated. Five other pieces by Liadoff, Cui, Borodin, which Tcherepin did not orchestrate, have been "freely transcribed" by Mr. Janssen. The angular and trite theme has been treated most ingeniously, and the whole thing proved most diverting on a first hearing, with special honors to Mr. Jansson for his particularly live share. Everybody in connection with this enterprise has done a fine job. Live, realistic recording. —P.H.R.

TCHAIKOWSKY: *Symphony No. 4, Op. 36;* **Vienna State Opera Orchestra, Hermann Scherchen (cond).** Westminster LP disc WL-5096, \$5.95.

▲THE most brilliant recording of this symphony to date. The performance is hardly traditional — the outer movements are dramatized to the utmost with tremendous drive and almost excessive tonal weight, while the inner movements are treated with more deference for their expressive content. Those who like their *Tchaikovsky* exciting and blatant should hear this record. It is likely to become a test recording for hi-fi equipment.—P.H.R.

Concerto

BRUCH: *Concerto in G minor, Op. 26;* **Yehudi Menuhin (violin)** with **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Charles Munch.** RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-122, \$4.67.

▲THIS — Menuhin's third performance of this popular concerto — is from a standpoint of recording and orchestral accompaniment undoubtedly the best. But Menuhin's first performance, made when he was sixteen in London, was far better played by him than his later ones in which he has developed a reserve in his feeling for this frankly sentimental and broadly flowing music. Of the versions of this work on records, Milstein's and Campoli's are the most praiseworthy. Owing to superior recording, the latter takes precedence in my estimation.

—P.H.R.

DVORAK: *Concerto for Cello, Op. 104;* **Pablo Casals, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Georg Szell (cond).** RCA Victor LP disc LCT-1026, \$5.72.

▲CASALS and Szell were truly *en rapport* in this performance. More so than Piatigorsky and Ormandy, though the former plays equally as well as Casals. The transfer to LP is remarkably vital, a true mirror of the original. —J.N.

MOZART: *Concerto in D minor, K. 466;* **Rudolf Serkin (piano)** with **Philadelphia Orch., Eugene Ormandy (cond).** Columbia ML-4424, \$5.45. The same; **Wilhelm Kempff (piano)** with **Dresden Phil. Orch., Paul van Kempen (cond).** Decca DL-7515, \$3.85.

▲Neither performance is completely satisfying. The Serkin-Ormandy, most realistically recorded, is too rapid in the outer movements and rather wayward in rhythmic matters in the slow. The decade-old Kempff-van Kempen shows its age. Much of the woodwind playing is lost. Kempff plays almost too precisely, ever so delicately, but without sufficient dramatic

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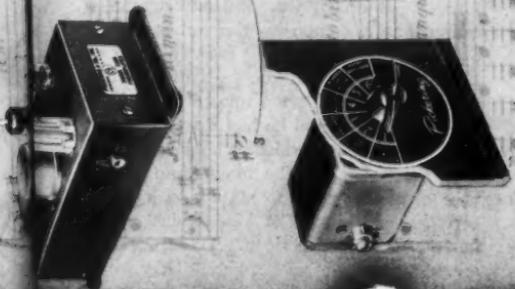
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passion. Clara Haskil, who had a stiff and unprecise accompaniment in her recent Westminster recording, brings more radiant playing to this wonderful concerto.

—C.J.L.

SAINT-SAENS: *Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22; Arthur Sanford (piano) and the Hastings Symphony Orchestra; Ballet Music from Henry VIII; Same orch., John Bath (cond).* *Allegro* LP disc ALG-3028, \$5.95.

▲THE concerto performance is challenged by the Lympney-Martinoz version (London), in which Miss Lympney plays with more polish and refinement and is backed by a less weighty orchestral accompaniment. The agreeable *Ballet Music* is well played and satisfactorily recorded. Surface noise prevailed in both selections on the disc sent for review.

—J.N.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2; Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet.* Westminster WL-5098, \$5.95.

▲THE CLARITY of the recording sketches cleanly every line of the four instruments. These Viennese players bring to this music greater tonal weight and dramatic thrust than we hear from most quartets. The validity of the approach is traceable to German tradition. The performance is decidedly worth hearing.

—P.H.R.

FRANCK: *Sonata in A major; Isaac Stern and Alexander Zakin.* Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2204, \$4.00.

▲MR. STERN has contributed nothing to the phonograph that has not commanded respect for his fine musicianship. Though true of this offering, I find his and Zakin's romantic treatment of this sonata less persuasive than the France-scotti-Casadesus performance (also Columbia) which is in every way a true successor to the old Thibaud-Cortot version. Firstrate recording.

—J.N.

IBERT: *Trois Pièces Brèves; MILHAUD: Two Sketches; BOZZA: Variations sur un Thème Libre; TAFFANEL: Quintet;* played by the **New York Woodwind Quintet.** Esoteric disc ES-505, \$5.95.

▲NONE of this music has been recorded before. Some of it should never have been. The Quintet by Paul Taffanel (1844-1908) is a rather pulverising example of sterile French academism at its worst, just as the two little Milhaud sketches are examples of sterile French modernism at its worst. Ibert's *Three Short Pieces* are fairly derivative (*Les Six*, etc.), but they do have a certain charm and an agreeable melodic outline. Eugene Bozza, if his Variations are a representative example of his music, works in the impressionistic idiom. He has nothing original to say, but he says it well, in a thoroughly musical manner. The performances of all these works by the New York Woodwind Quintet (Bernard Garfield, bassoon; Wallace Shapiro, clarinet; Raymond Alonge, horn; Samuel Baron, flute; Albert Goltzer, oboe) are excellent, and the recording itself is superb.

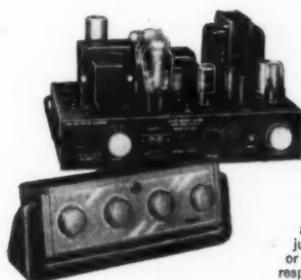
—H.C.S.

IVES: *Sonatas Nos. 1 and 3 for Violin and Piano; Joan Field and Leopold Mittman.* Lyrichord LP disc LL-17, \$5.95.

▲CHARLES IVES was an amateur, experimenting with unusual tonal effects, when he wrote these works back in 1903 to 1914. In recent years, he has been acclaimed as a composer who anticipated Stravinsky and others. Ives, a New Englander, loved old tunes—hymns and folk songs — and often quoted them in his own fashion, and he had a feeling for ragtime — all of which is apparent in these two works. The momentum and urge of the composer's style makes for diverting listening of a kind which can be termed truly American. These works are worth hearing and knowing. They are excellently performed by two artists who surmount the composer's difficulties in a creditable manner.

—J.N.

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POULENC: *Sextet for Piano and Winds; Trio for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon; Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon*; played by The Fairfield Chamber Group (Harry Shulman, oboe; David Weber, clarinet; Leonard Sharow, bassoon; Harold Bennett, flute; Fred Klein, horn; Charles Rosen, piano). R.E.B. Editions disc No. 7, \$5.95.

▲POULENC has been one of the bad boys of music, making fun of his elders, listening to no sage advice, irreverent and naughty. And yet he has written much music, including a number of songs, which most certainly will live. Not too many modern composers can make that claim.

The three works here are not too successful as chamber music. Poulenc always has been uncomfortable in formal clothes. But, formally successful or not, these three works are a lot of fun to listen to. The Sextet (1932-39) is a graceful piece of music with a particularly juicy, sentimental theme in the first movement. The 1926 Trio is a more smart-alecky work (notice the quotation from Gluck in the slow movement), purposely light-headed and giddy, with Poulenc's typical thumb-to-nose posture towards "classical" music. "Dada" encroaches here; in no place but Paris of the 1920's could it have been composed. The 1922 Sonata is the most astringent of the three works. Poulenc was still in his "modern" stage; he had to show the world that he was no precocious youngster, but a composer who knew his dissonance and polytonality as well as anybody. As a result, the Sonata is the weakest of the three works, just as it is the most successful in matters of form.

This is a thoroughly attractive disc. It is too bad that the recording is not all that it might be. There is some pickup-jumping due to defects in grooving (perhaps the review copy was defective), and the engineers have fiddled around with the dynamics a little too much. The performances are all that one could desire — as was to be expected, with instrumentalists the likes of Messrs. Weber, Sharow, et. al.

—H.C.S.

SCHUBERT: *Quintet in C major, Op. 163; Budapest String Quartet with Benar Heifetz (2nd cello). Columbia LP disc ML-4437, \$5.45.*

▲THE BUDAPEST ensemble made this recording when it was in top form, back in 1942. A fine performance by any musical standards, it suffers from lack of coloration owing to dynamic limitations. The Hollywood Quartet ensemble (Capitol), better recorded, is a strong challenger, as is also the Vienna Konzerthaus group (Westminster) with its richer tonal weight. Columbia engineers have done an excellent job in the transfer to LP. —P.H.R.

Keyboard

BACH, J. C.: *Sonatas in E and C minor, Op. 5, Nos. 5 and 6; Sonata in B flat, Op. 17, No. 6; Margaret Tolson (piano). WCFM LP disc 7, \$5.95.*

▲DESPITE the fact that these sonatas by Bach's youngest son are given considerable historical importance by the annotator, they do not sustain similar interest to this listener. It may be that the style of each at this late date is far too familiar and lacking in the unfaded inspiration of others of Johann Christian's time, though it cannot be denied that the devices employed in them are sound, and certainly contain long well known expressive material. As Margaret Tolson plays them neatly and objectively — undoubtedly in the right manner, for appreciation of her sound artistry it might be well to listen to one sonata at a time. Clean piano recording.

—C.J.L.

BACH: *Fantasia in A minor, Toccata in D minor; Chaconne in D minor; Reine Gianoli (piano). Westminster LP disc WL-5101, \$5.95.*

▲SPLENDID piano recording throughout does little more than mirror the erratic, over-dynamic playing by Reine Gianoli of Bach's wonderful *Fantasia in A minor* and *Toccata in D minor*. And nothing could do less justice to the famous *Chaconne*

than the transcription used here. Gianoli's excessively distended phrasing and pretentious mannerisms do not help matters either.

—J.N.

BACH: *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor; Concerto No. 2 in A minor; Carl Weinrich (organ), MGM 10" LP E98, \$3.00.*

▲THIS is the first volume in MGM's proposed series, *A Survey of Bach's Organ Music*. They could not have found a finer artist to record for them. Carl Weinrich is probably America's greatest interpreter of Bach's organ work. He has never received adequate popular attention and his early recordings, both on shellac and in their recent LP appearance, are technically so poor that they give little idea of his artistry. The present recording, though no miracle of modern engineering, gives a very good idea indeed. The disc was made last June at Princeton and the chapel organ is used. The only competition offered Weinrich's masterly performance of the *Passacaglia and Fugue* is that of Heitmann (Cap. L-8105) who uses one of the finest instruments in the world. In the concerto — a Vivaldi transcription — Weinrich has no competition at all. This is an unusually lovely work with a very tender middle movement. His treatment is at once affectionate and powerful. Since this series intends to include all of Bach's major works for the organ we may look forward to more authoritative and enjoyable performances.

—D.R.

CHOPIN: *Preludes, Op. 28; Alexander Brailowsky (piano). Victor disc LM-1150, \$5.67.*

▲SO NOW we have four LP discs of the *Preludes*. The predecessors to this one were made by Rubinstein (originally on shellac), Novaes and Arrau. All of these are big guns among contemporary pianists, but only one version stands out — that of Novaes, for its romanticism, nuance and imagination. Rubinstein's should have been better than it is; it sounds like a rush job, with some careless playing from

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the soloist. The Arrau interpretation is bleak and colorless.

It cannot be said that Brailowsky employs much color. Of his general competence there is no doubt, but one wonders just how much the music means to him. He is like a doctor who is faced with his millionth inflamed tonsil. Reflexes go into action, and what must be done is done neatly and efficiently, with a minimum of waste. But Brailowsky does not appear to show too much personal interest in the patient. As in all of his playing of recent years he falls into monotonous horizontal dynamic patterns, and he just is not interested in playing softly. Nor does his somewhat percussive tone help matters, not to mention his square way of shaping a phrase. This is not the Brailowsky who was such an accomplished artist about twenty years ago.

—H.C.S.

DEBUSSY: *Twelve Etudes*; **Charles Rosen** (piano). R.E.B. LP disc 6, \$5.95.

▲THESE ETUDES are Debussy's last works for the piano. Shamefully neglected by most big-name pianists, these important pieces represent "a summation and codification of post-Listzian piano technique as revised by Debussy." Their importance to every player of a modern pianoforte cannot be minimized. No musical education can be considered complete today without a knowledge of them.

The Debussy etudes are more than just exercises; like Chopin's they are genuinely musical, serious of thought, charming as expression. They are played here with considerable insight and rare tonal coloration by the very gifted Charles Rosen. These elegant performances are superbly recorded. Highly recommended. —C.J.L.

DOHNANYI: *Four Rhapsodies*, Op. 11; **WEINER:** *Hungarian Peasant Songs*, Op. 22; **Miklos Schwallb** (piano). Academy LP disc ALP-301, \$5.95.

▲PIANO STUDENTS in particular will welcome this disc. All of the pieces here presented have a certain freshness and all are gratefully written. I prefer Wein-

er's contributions for their delicacy and strength, but the Brahms-rhapsody-like-verb of several of the Dohnanyi efforts do make their points. Miklos Schwallb plays with crispness and dispatch. A little more suaveness might have helped here and there, but there is no denying the directness of his approach. Acceptable recording, somewhat noisy surfaces.

—C.J.L.

FAURE: *Dolly*, Op. 56; **Robert and Gaby Casadesus**; *Nocturne*, Op. 74, No. 7; *Barcarolle*, Op. 66, No. 5; *Impromptu*, Op. 102, No. 5; **Robert Casadesus**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2205, \$4.00.

▲AMONG recording duo-pianists, Casadesus and his wife exhibit a fresh and unspoilt talent. Fauré's evocation of childhood, *Dolly*, which deals with child's play, is admired by many for its sensitivity and charm. The three solo pieces, fine examples of the composer's poetic craft, are sympathetically played by Mr. Casadesus.

—J.N.

FRENCH MASTERS OF THE HARP-SICHORD: **Claude Jean Chiasson** (harpsichord). Lyrichord LP LL19, \$5.95.

▲THIS is one of the most delightful collections of harpsichord music to appear in a long time. Not only is the majority of the material completely unfamiliar but also Mr. Chiasson performs it with such affection and zest that the result is a disc with which one can scarcely afford not to be familiar. The collection comprises three charming small dances of the 16th-century publisher, Pierre Atteignant; a stunning *Parane and Basse Danse* by the all too little-known Claude Gervaise; a *Chaconne and Rondeau in F* by the 17th-century composer, Jacques de Champonnieres; Daquin's *La Mélodieuse*; the witty *Dialogue* of Nicolas de Grigny; four little pieces by the 18th-century master, François Dandrieu, *Les Tourbillons*, *Le Tympanon*, *Les Fifres* and the "La Favorite" *Variations*; Rameau's *Prélude et Gigue*, the rondeau "La Timide" and *Le Vénitien*.

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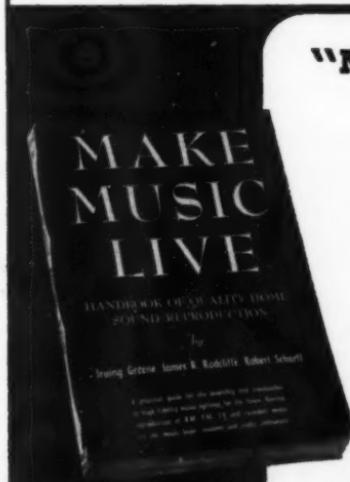
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tienne, as well as Claude Balbastre's *Noël*. Mr. Chiasson's work deserves the highest praise, not only because of the artistry of his performance, but also for his choice of works. A word too should be said about the excellence of the recording. Almost never has the harpsichord been better served by the engineer. —D.R.

GERSHWIN: *Piano Transcriptions of 18 Songs*; **Leonard Hambro.** Walden Records WL-200, \$5.95.

▲THESE transcriptions were made by the composer and originally published by Simon and Schuster in 1932 in *Gershwin's Song Book*. They were the ones that Gershwin liked to play to friends at parties. Leonard Hambro performs them smartly and efficiently, in a manner that suggests he might be seated at the piano just to entertain his friends. Very fine piano tone. —J.N.

A HARPSICHORD RECITAL: **Couperin** and Rameau; **Sylvia Marlowe** (harpsichord), MGM 10" LP E538, \$3.00.

▲THIS is, to the best of my knowledge, a dubbing onto LP of an album which Miss Marlowe made for Musicraft some years ago. At least the program is the same and performances sound identical. The Rameau works are the famous *La Poule* and the not so well-known *Gavotte variée*, which has been called "the little Goldberg variations." The Couperin works are the fantastic *Les Fastes de la grande et ancienne Ménestrelle*, with its musical pictures of beggars, clowns, tumblers, bears and monkeys, and the more familiar piece of delicate clockwork, *Le Tic-Toc-Choc*. Miss Marlowe has performed all of these with her usual verve and attention to detail. The dubbing is satisfactory. —D.R.

SCHUMANN: *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*; **BRAHMS:** *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann*; played by **Jacqueline Blancard** (piano). Vanguard disc VRS-416, \$5.95.

▲SCHUMANN'S *Faschingsschwank* is as interesting a piece as the Brahms is dull. It was not until the *Handel Variations* that Brahms started composing for the piano with any degree of security. The *Schumann Variations* show all of the defects of his early piano style — muddy writing, ideas that are intended to be noble but which end up boring (the final variation being a case in point), a muscle-bound musical approach and not too much ingenuity in handling the form itself. No pianist can really make it interesting. Miss Blancard has as much success as anybody, save where the technical problems are a bit too much for her.

In the *Faschingsschwank* her sensitivity comes to the fore. This is gracious and aristocratic piano playing with a well-grounded sense of style behind it. Miss Blancard is not afraid of a lyric line, and she knows how to sustain it. In this she is in sharp contrast to many of the young school of pianists who have twice her technique but who cannot play two measures of honest lyricism without going to pieces. Perhaps Miss Blancard is the artist to carry on a series of Schumann recordings. There are not many around.

—H.C.S.

Sousa (trans. Horowitz): *Stars and Stripes Forever*; **Brahms:** *Waltz in A flat, Op. 39, No. 15*; **Moskowski:** *Etude in F*; **Vladimir Horowitz** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3424, \$1.10.

▲ANYONE who has heard Horowitz in concert knows about his sensational performance of the Sousa march, generally heard as an encore piece that prompts a storm of applause. It is the kind of *tour de force* in which Horowitz, with his prodigious virtuosity, excels. Victor has made an amazingly realistic recording of his performance, one that few listeners will want to miss. His Brahms' waltz and Moskowski etude are pallid in comparison, nor does one feel that he is temperamentally suited to either piece. There's

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some first-rate piano playing in them nonetheless. I'd say the *Stars and Stripes Forever* would be the record side that got the most wear.

—J.N.

Voice

BACH: *Anna Magdalena Book — Selections*; Kurt Rapf (harpsichord) and Maja Weis-Osborn (soprano). Bach Guild LP disc BG 510, \$5.95.

▲THE *Notenbüchlein der Anna Magdalena Bach* was Johann Sebastian's second wife's musical commonplace book, containing pieces of which presumably she was fond of or for which she at some time or another had a special occasion. For the most part the collection is made up of clavier music — little dances, suites, preludes, fugues, etc. — though here and there is a song. Not all the pieces are by Bach. It is a nice idea to have these little works recorded as a collection, though we are not told what principle governed the first selection, nor just what are the plans for continuing the project. The harpsichord solos now presented are played in a competent and businesslike manner. This is undoubtedly appropriate enough, though a little more flexibility might have added to the charm of the music. Miss Weis-Osborn sings tastefully in a clear and attractive soprano. Her tempo in the best known of the songs — *Willst du dein Herz mir schenken* — is more deliberate than is usual, her vocal line delightfully poised. It is curious to hear from this type of voice the recitative and aria *Ich habe genug* and *Schlummert ein* from the bass solo cantata no. 82, but the impression is decidedly good. It is amusing, too, to recognize the theme of *Frohe, Hirten, eilt* from the *Christmas Oratorio* in a little minuet, and to come on the famous first *Prelude* (given world-celebrity by Gounod's superimposed melody) in this collection. There is even a chorale prelude included — *Wer nur den lieben Gott lasst walten*. The recording is admirably clear and sharp in tone, but as usual with harpsi-

chord the reproduction is improved by cutting both the highs and the volume. An unnamed cellist assists in the recitative and aria mentioned above.

—P.L.M.

COWARD: *Conversation piece*; Lily Pons (Melanie), Noel Coward (Paul), Cathleen Nesbitt (Lady Julia Charteris), Ethel Griffies (Duchess of Beneden), Norah Howard (Rose, speaking), Ellen Faull (Rose, singing), Richard Burton (Marquis of Sheere), Rex Evans (The Duke of Beneden), Eileen Turner (Sophie Otford, speaking), Dorothy Johnson (Sophie Otford, singing and Martha James, speaking), Rosalind Nadell (Martha James, singing), with children's chorus and orchestra conducted by Lehman Engel. Columbia set SL 163, 2 LP discs, \$10.90.

▲IT WAS amusing to hear again this slight conceit of 1934 and to make the inevitable unfair, long-range comparisons between Yvonne Printemps with Pierre Fresnay and Lily Pons with Mr. Coward in the leading roles. Strangely, about all I have remembered over the years has been Miss Printemps' not inconsiderable charm. As the requirements of her role include a sweet singing voice and a piquant French accent as well as the aforementioned intangible, it was only natural that Miss Pons be selected to take it over. The surprising thing about her performance is her effectiveness as an actress. One wonders occasionally if she hasn't even thickened her accent, but if so she has done it effectively. Mr. Coward has assumed a similar one, but his delivery is none the less unmistakable. As for the singing, there is no denying Miss Pons has sounded fresher, yet I am sure her admirers are going to love this set. *I'll follow my secret heart* may very well be in for a popular revival. The supporting cast is excellent — especially Cathleen Nesbitt as Lady Julia — but it is a shock to hear the cultured Miss Faull as the singing voice of Rose after the Cockney speech of Norah Howard who shares the role. Encouraged, no doubt, by his popular success in read-

ing the Ogden Nash *Carnival of animals* verses, Mr. Coward has added some lines by way of stage setting, and he delivers them with tremendous gusto. The recording is a model for such productions.

—P.L.M.

COPLAND: *Old American Songs*:

DOUGHERTY: *Five Sea Chanties*; William Warfield (baritone) with Aaron Copland and Otto Herz (pianists). Columbia 10" LP ML2206, \$4.00.

▲ Both of these collections are arrangements of folksongs. The Dougherty work is the expected: tasteful and rather dull settings of *Rio Grande*, *Blow Ye Winds*, *Across the Western Ocean*, *Mobile Bay* and *Shenandoah*. Warfield exhibits a great sincerity and Otto Herz is, as usual, the perfect accompanist. The Copland is the unexpected: imaginative, iconoclastic and extremely diverting recreations of little-known American songs of the 19th-century, including *The Boatman's Dance*, *The Dodger*, *Long Time Ago*, *Simple Gifts* — which the composer also used in the music for *Appalachian Spring* — and a perfectly delightful children's song called *I Bought Me A Cat*. Warfield does these practically to perfection, accompanied by Copland himself. His voice is unusually vibrant and extremely pleasant. His range is such that he need reach for nothing — it's all right there. In addition, his approach is so perceptively mature and his rich sense of humor so much in evidence that a better performance of this ingratiating music is difficult to imagine. The recording is one of Columbia's best.

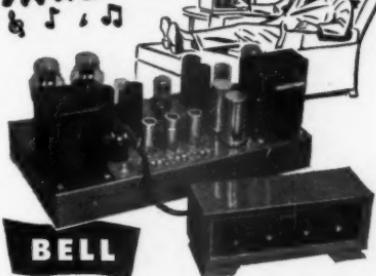
—D.R.

GOUNOD: *Faust*; Georges Noré (Faust), Roger Rico (Mephisto), Roger Bourdin (Valentine), Geori-Boué (Marguerite), Betty Bannerman (Martha), and others, with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. RCA Victor LP set LCT-6100, 3 discs, \$17.16.

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— indeed the balance is most satisfying. The singers are highly competent, suitable for recording though doubtful in vocal amplitude for a large opera house like the Metropolitan. There are memorable moments in this production — the truly "devilish" interpretation of Mephisto by Rico (now singing in *South Pacific*), the girlish charm of Geori-Boué, the youthful fervor of Nore's Faust, the poised artistry of Bourdin as Valentine, and the wonderful choral singing which climaxes in an unsurpassed *Soldiers' Chorus*. For all the sterling qualities of Columbia's recent *Faust* recording, this Beecham-directed version is the more appreciative production for its truer French style. —P.H.R.

HANDEL: *Messiah*; Elsie Suddaby, Marjorie Thomas, Heddle Nash, Trevor Anthony, Luton Choral Society and Special Choir, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. RCA Victor LCT-6401, \$22.88.

▲THE "irresistible vitality" of Sir Thomas' direction supplies a thrill in this famous score not hitherto heard on records. When originally reviewed in May 1948, it was rightfully stated that it was doubtful if Beecham's performance "will find a formidable rival for many years to come." The wonderful choral singing is matched by the expressiveness of the four competent singers. The transfer to LP is a full satisfactory one — showing the skill of Victor's engineers. If the recording is not as brilliant as another, this does not counterbalance its superior performance.

—P.H.R.

SCHUBERT: *Die schöne Müllerin*, Op. 25; Martial Singher (baritone) and Paul Ulanowsky (piano). Concert Hall LP disc CHS 114, \$5.95.

▲THE BEST tribute I can pay this performance of the little Müller-Schubert tragedy is to say that it left me once more moved by the fate of the young miller who loved not wisely but too well. And for once I could almost be glad that Concert Hall had seen fit to issue the two LP sides without dividing bands (a fact that may

cost them sales to educational institutions where the cycle is studied) if only because this will force the listener to consider the little musical drama as a whole rather than by way of its more famous individual parts. I can add that it has been some years since Singher has sounded as well as this on records. Aside from evidences of effort in the higher reaches, and resulting questionable intonation, the baritone is very much in his old form.

Obviously the singer has put much honest effort and thought into this performance, though it can hardly be said he is equally at home in Schubert lieder as in his French repertoire. That he clearly understands the words he sings is compensation for his not quite native accent and his definitely not native tonal quality. There are admirable details throughout the set, such as the gruff geniality of his imitation of the master's voice in *Am Feierabend* and his intelligent phrasing of the line *Aus dem tiefen Herzen ruft in Morgengrüss*. On the other hand he has overdone the omission of stanzas in the strophic songs — *Mit dem grünen Läulenband* is for example too short. Perhaps it is not surprising that he finds the more sustained songs easier going than the rapid ones. He is especially fortunate in his partner: I have saved mention of Mr. Ulanowsky until now simply because his playing is right enough in itself to hold the cycle together. The way he varies the introduction-interlude of *Thränenregen* is masterly, not to mention the lute-playing in *Pause*. All in all, if this recording does not efface memories of Schiotz and Hüsch it has the inestimable advantage of continuous LP performance.

—P.L.M.

VIVALDI: *Juditha triumphans*; Maria Amadini (contralto), Rosanna Giancola (soprano), Marcello Cortis (baritone), Emilio Cristinelli (tenor), Giuliano Ferrein (basso), with La Fenice Theatre Chorus and Scuola Veneziana Symphony Orchestra conducted by Angelo Ephrikian. Period set SPLP 533, 3 LP discs, \$18.50.

▲THOSE WHO hold that musical expressiveness is a distinctly nineteenth century manifestation (if, indeed, any one still does) are in for a surprise hearing this oratorio by Bach's great Italian contemporary. The arias and recitatives are laden with characterization and descriptive touches; the dramatization, though static and slow-moving, is effective as such. Aside from the beauty of the vocal lines, there is a rich and varied imagination in the choice of accompanying instruments: plucked strings, a plaintive oboe obbligato, mandolins, an organ to set off the words of Ozias the priest. For once, too, the heroine prays in recitative rather than aria — for Vivaldi recognized that hers was that kind of prayer — and her ensuing description of the bloody deed she must do is wonderfully impressive.

The performance is in many ways excellent, if uneven. The best of the singers is Mr. Cortis (the Holofernes), a fine flexible baritone with style as well as technical assurance. Miss Amadini (Judith) shows a rich and ample contralto, though inclined to flatness. One might wish for more subtlety in her delivery, but she sings with taste. Miss Giancola and Mr. Ferrein are good in their parts, Mr. Cristinelli less so — his light voice is too open.

The recording as a whole is passable, though the balance is not altogether satisfactory. The solos are often overloaded and not well matched with the choruses. There was also some surface noise in the copy reviewed. Another point of production: some of the numbers are run too closely together, giving a businesslike effect.

—P.L.M.

WAGNER: *Fünf Gedichte*; **Tiana Lemnitz** (soprano) and **Michael Raucheisen** (piano); *Lohengrin* — Love duet; *Tannhäuser* — Dich, leure Halle; **Tiana Lemnitz** (soprano) and **Franz Volker** (tenor) with **Radio Berlin Orchestra** conducted by **Arthur Rother**. **Urania** LP disc URLP 7019, \$5.95.

▲**MISS LEMNITZ** recorded the Wesendonck *Gedichte* for Polydor in the mid-

thirties, and her performance has been sought after for its tonal velvet and perfection of phrasing rather than for any show of temperament or for such vocal outpourings as we have had from Farrell, Flagstad and Traubel. Being true to Wagner's original piano score the Lemnitz records were for many years unique even among the single records of *Träume*, *Schmerzen* and *Der Engel*, a distinction now shared with the Flagstad and Lotte Lehmann performances. The new recording has some of the best features of the old, though on direct comparison I found the voice a shade or two less fresh and solid, the support not quite so secure and the phrasing not so masterly. Still, if less exciting than the Farrell-Stokowski recording of the cycle or the Frida Leider disc of *Träume* and *Schmerzen*, Miss Lemnitz' singing cannot fail to move by its sheer lyric beauty.

For the *Lohengrin* duet **Urania** claims the distinction of being the "only complete recording in existence." Granting

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that the Traubel-Baum and the earlier Flagstad-Melchoir — the latter not yet on LP — are to some extent cut, it is equally true that this one does not continue to the end. Again the Lemnitz voice is a thing of loveliness, but that of the long admired tenor is not up to its best. Lemnitz's *Dich, teure Halle* is not a happy effort. Here where Elisabeth is supposed to be bold and ecstatic, Miss Lemnitz's voice is fluttery and lacking in hard core, nor is she too definite in her intonation.

—P.L.M.

WAGNER: *Die Walkure* — Act I; *Lotte Lehmann, Lauritz Melchior, Emanuel List, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Bruno Walter (cond.)*. RCA Victor LP disc LCT-1033, \$5.72.

▲ A so-called "Collector's Issue" which should turn out to be one of the most prized Wagnerian recordings, for despite the inequalities of the recording (made in 1936) the superb artistic qualities of the ensemble and the wonderful spirit of the whole performance is a major consideration which outweighs any reproductive flaws. It is nothing short of amazing what Victor engineers have done in handling this recording.

—P.H.R.

WOLF: *Der Feuerreiter; Gesellenlied; Denk' es, o Seele; Im Frühling; Helge Roswaenge* (tenor) and *Michael Raucheisen* (piano). *Über Nacht; Gesang Weylas; Rat einer Alten; Margarete Klose* (contralto) and *Michael Raucheisen* (piano). *In der Frühe; Nixe Binsefuss; Mignon; St. Nepomuks Vora-bend; Elfenlied; Trete ein, hoher Krieger; Wie glänzt der helle Mond; Er ist's; Annemarie Simon* (soprano) and *Paul Ulanowsky* (piano). *Urania* LP disc URLP 7025, \$5.95.

▲ OLDER COLLECTORS have long known Roswaenge's interpretations of the grisly ballad of the "Fire-rider" and the Meistersinger-like song of the apprentice, both of which were included in the sixth volume of the Hugo Wolf Society. He has

certainly lost nothing of the powerful virtuosity that made him a good choice for these big songs, and his voice has withstood remarkably well the ravages of time. The disturbing philosophy of *Denk' es, o Seele* is vividly realized, and the previously unrecorded *Im Frühling* shows that strength is not this singer's only asset. Miss Klose sings the youthful *Über Nacht* and the bardic *Gesang Weylas* operatically but with telling effect, though she works too hard at giving advice to the young in *Rat einer Alten*. Her voice is at its superb best.

The American Miss Simon presents a nicely varied program with admirable taste and musicianly phrasing. She too has the usual tendency to make too much of some of the songs, the lovely and little known *St. Nepomuks Vora-bend* suffering the most from this. And I have still to hear a realization in performance of the special kind of barbed humor inherent in *Trete ein, hoher Krieger*. In sum, this is commendable if not completely communicative singing by a voice lovely at its best but inclined to shrillness.

—P.L.M.

New Opera Releases

(Continued from page 112)

Gigli sadly lacks in the Victor set. His singing shows sound schooling and there are few places where one feels that he is forcing his manly voice unduly. Curiously, this tenor — new to me — sounds much like the Gigli of long ago in some places. Panerai's Amonasro has requisite dramatic thrust and vocal power, and Massaria's King and Neri's Ramfis are capably presented. The chorus is splendid. Gui, one of the most reliable conductors in Italy, is a thoroughly efficient workman though lacking in some of the niceties that Serafin achieves. The recording is most realistic with an acoustic liveness that sometimes plays "echo" tricks.

—P.H.R.

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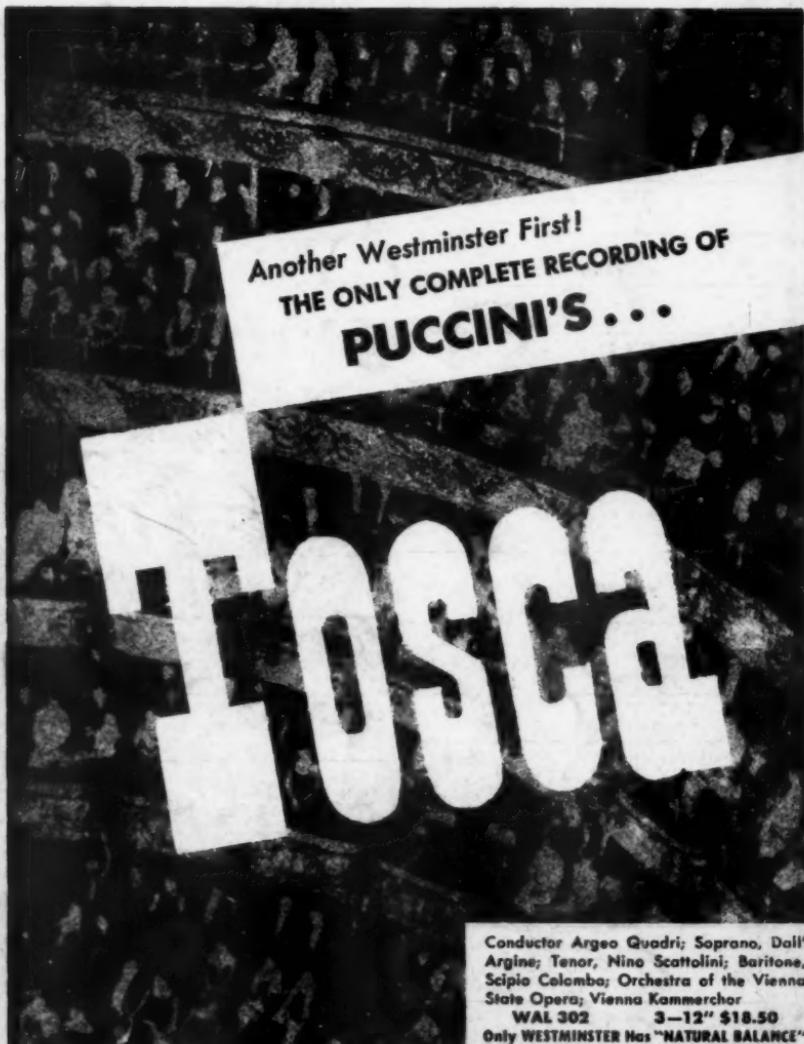
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